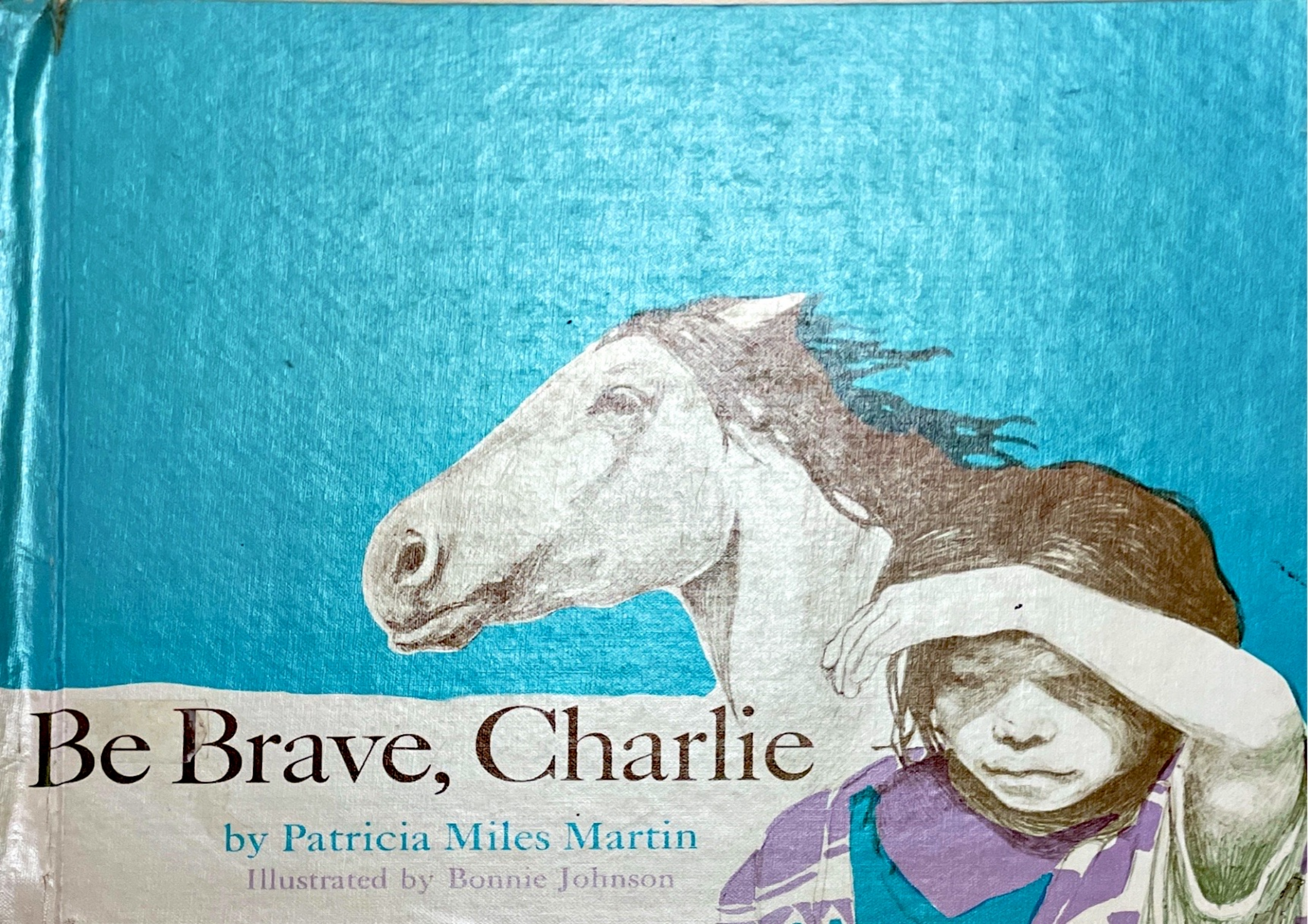




Be Brave, Charlie

by Patricia Miles Martin

Illustrated by Bonnie Johnson

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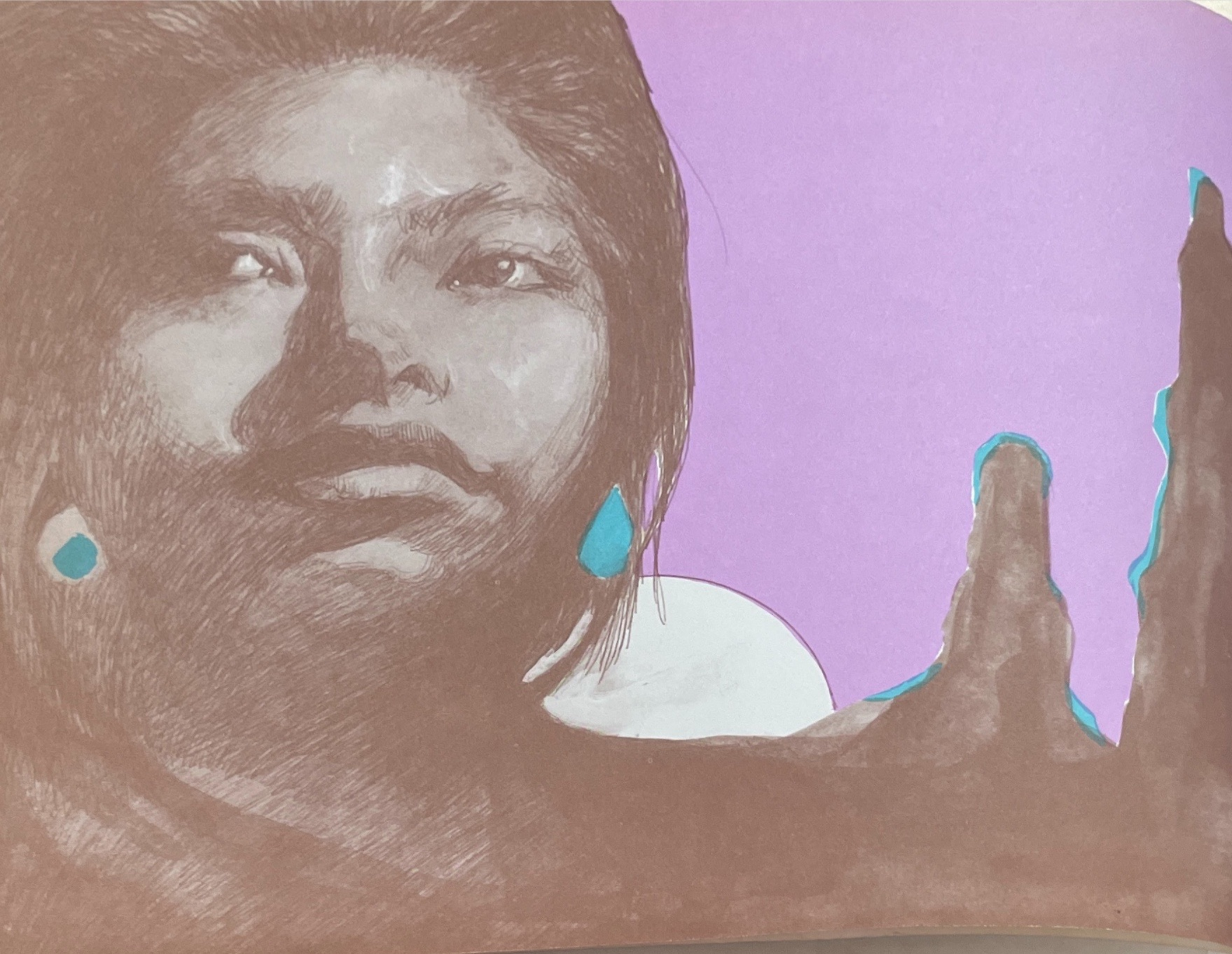
About the Author



Patricia Miles Martin was born in Cherokee, Kansas, and grew up on the prairies of Eastern Colorado. Mrs. Martin has written nearly seventy books for young readers under her own name and the pseudonym Miska Miles. One of her most recent books, *Annie and the Old One*, won the 1972 Christopher Medal. She has written many books for Putnam's, including *Navajo Pet*, *That Cat 1-2-3*, *There Goes the Tiger*, and *See and Read Biographies: James Madison, Zachary Taylor, and Thomas Edison*. Mrs. Martin lives with her husband in San Mateo, California.

About the Artist

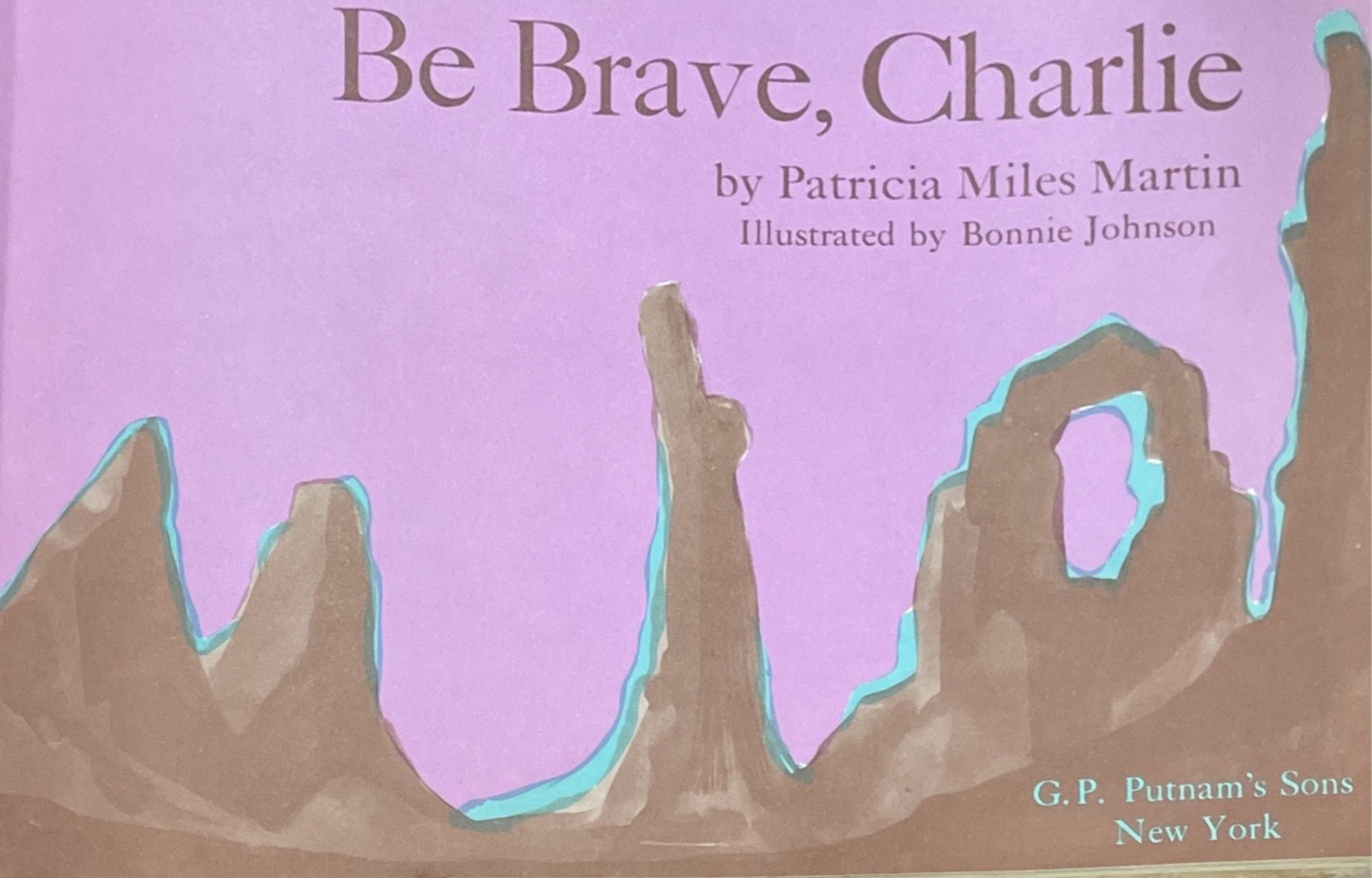
Bonnie Johnson is the daughter of a Blackfoot from Montana. A talented young artist rapidly gaining recognition in children's book illustration, she has also illustrated for leading magazines and worked on window displays. Bonnie Johnson lives in New York City with her young son, Grey Deer, who is a professional Indian dancer.



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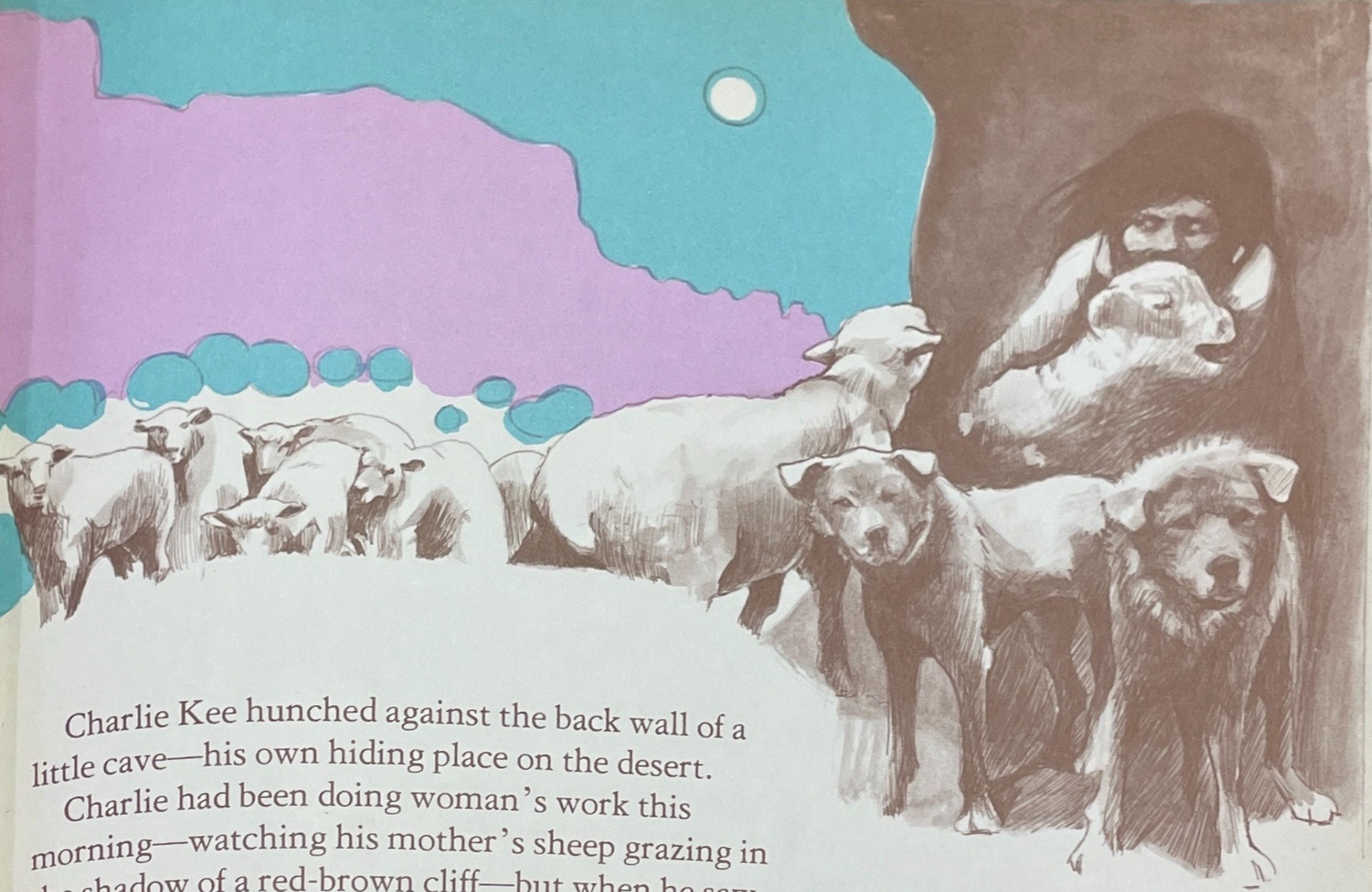


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To Cy Wall

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Charlie Kee hunched against the back wall of a little cave—his own hiding place on the desert.

Charlie had been doing woman's work this morning—watching his mother's sheep grazing in the shadow of a red-brown cliff—but when he saw his uncle's yellow pickup coming across the desert, he scrambled through sagebrush and he hid.

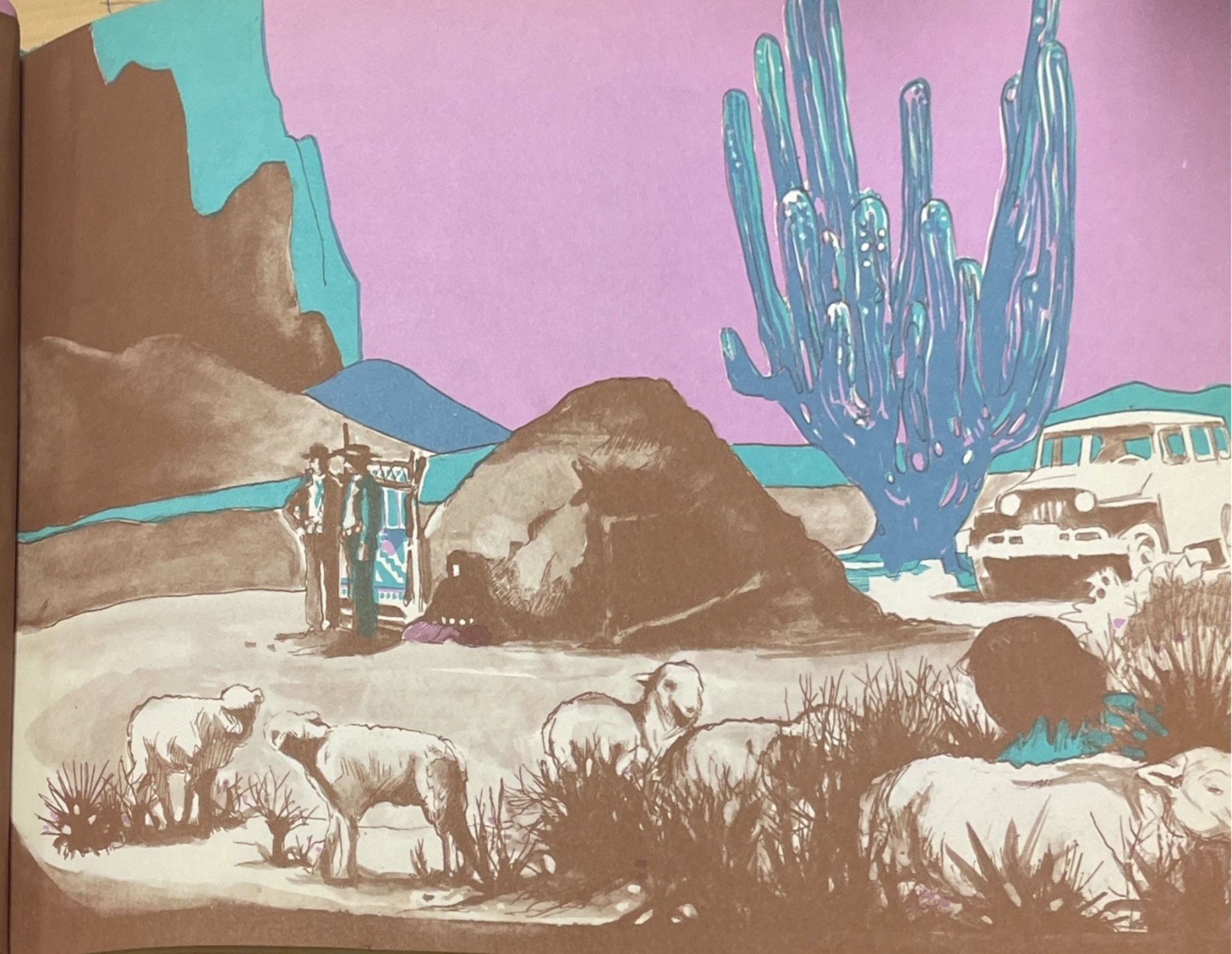
For Uncle John Yazzie was looking for him.
For three years, nobody noticed that Charlie was big enough to go to school, but this fall, a Navajo from the government school came to their hogan. He told Charlie's mother and father why it would be good for Charlie to go to school. And Charlie's father spoke to John Yazzie.

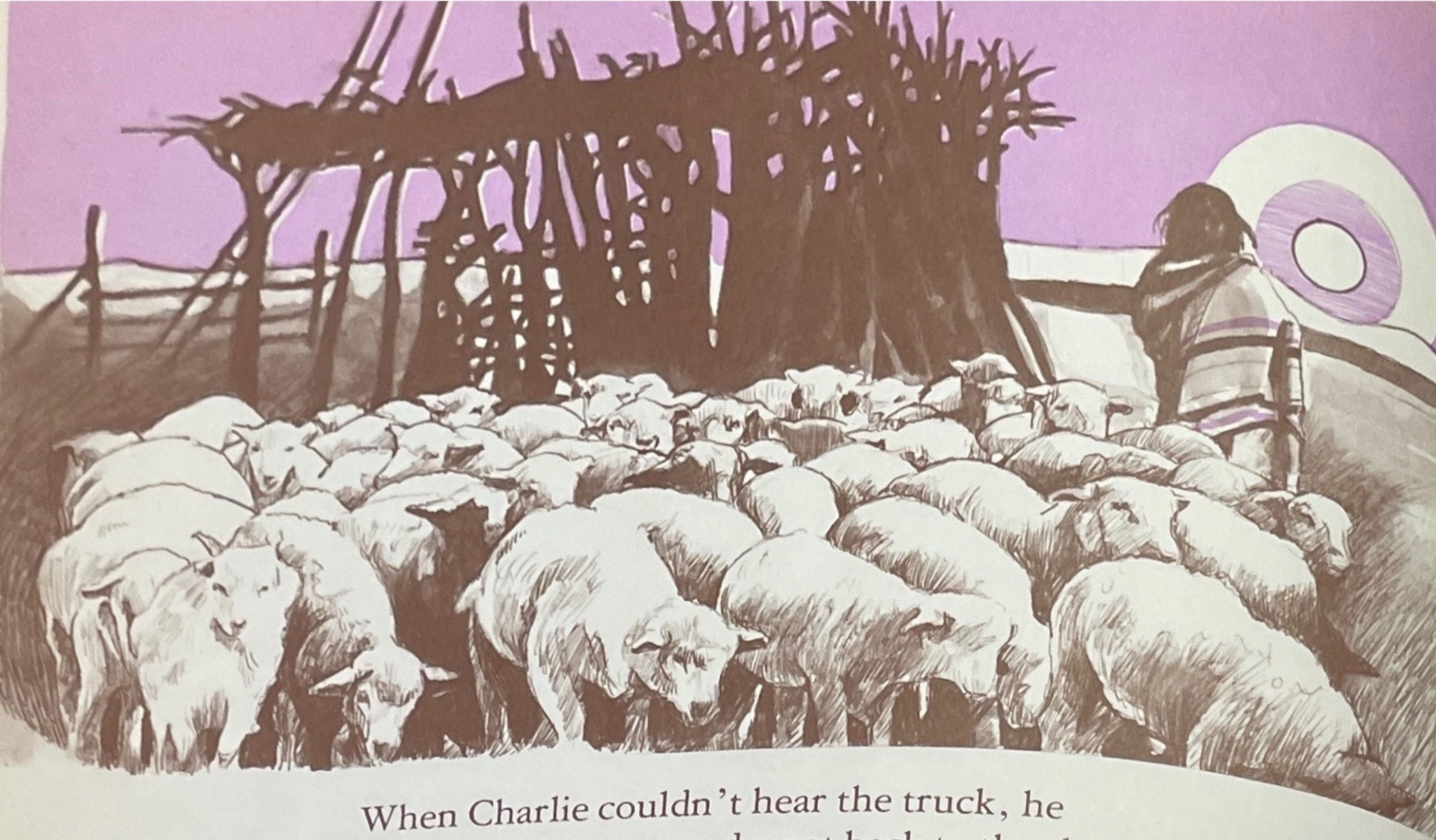
John Yazzie worked in a filling station near the trading post, and he said that one day when he didn't have to work, he'd drive Charlie to boarding school and leave him there.

Today was the day.

Charlie's uncle stopped his pickup near the grazing sheep.

For a short while, he looked out over the desert. Then he turned the truck around and started back the way he had come.





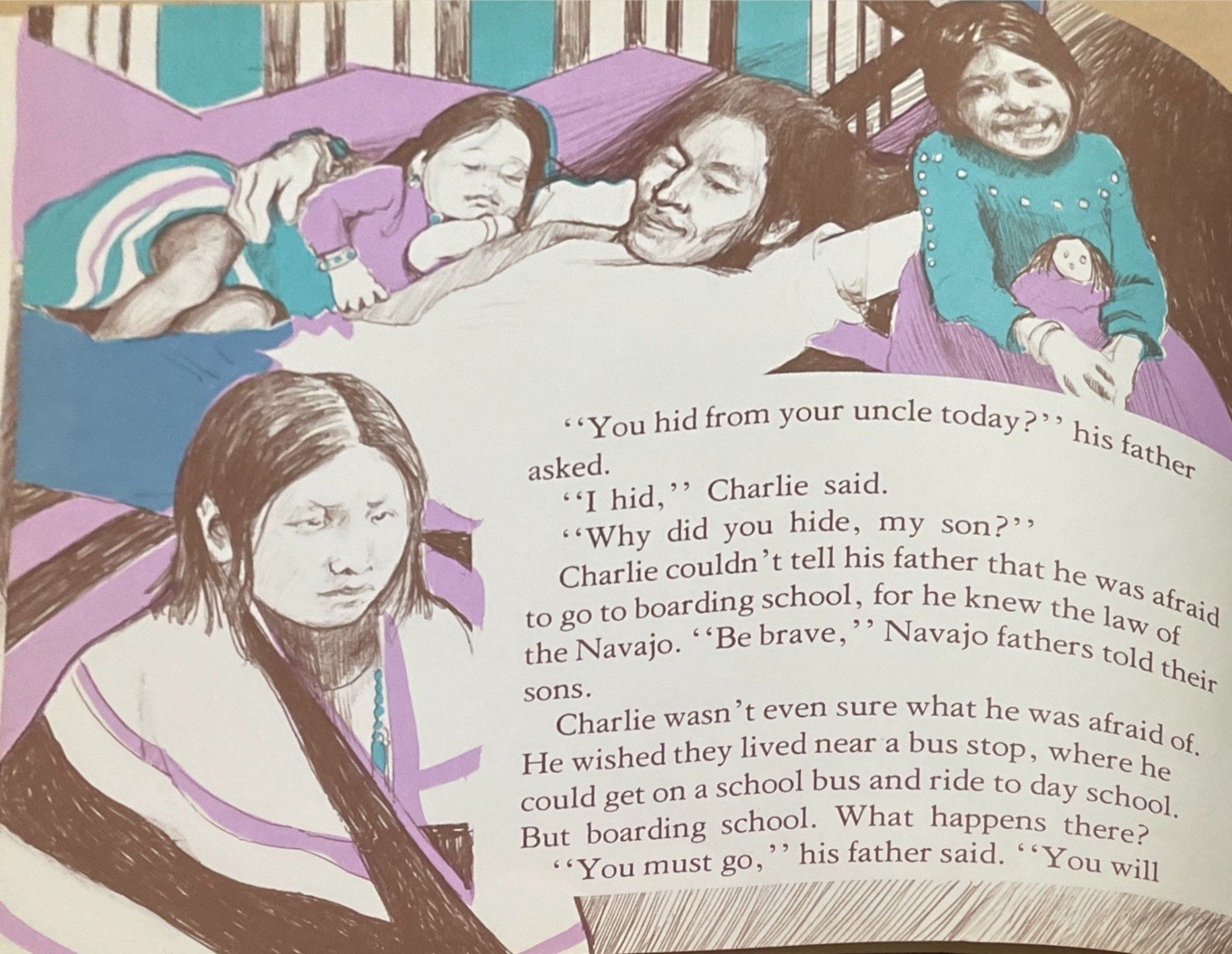
When Charlie couldn't hear the truck, he crawled from his cave and went back to the sheep. The day was long, but herding was certainly better than going to school.

When the sun set in a red sky, he drove the sheep home and put them in the night pen.

Inside the hogan, his two small sisters and his father waited for their evening meal.

Charlie's mother slapped fry bread between her palms. She stooped over a little fire in the middle of the hogan and dropped the flattened dough into a pan of sputtering, smoking fat.





“You hid from your uncle today?” his father asked.

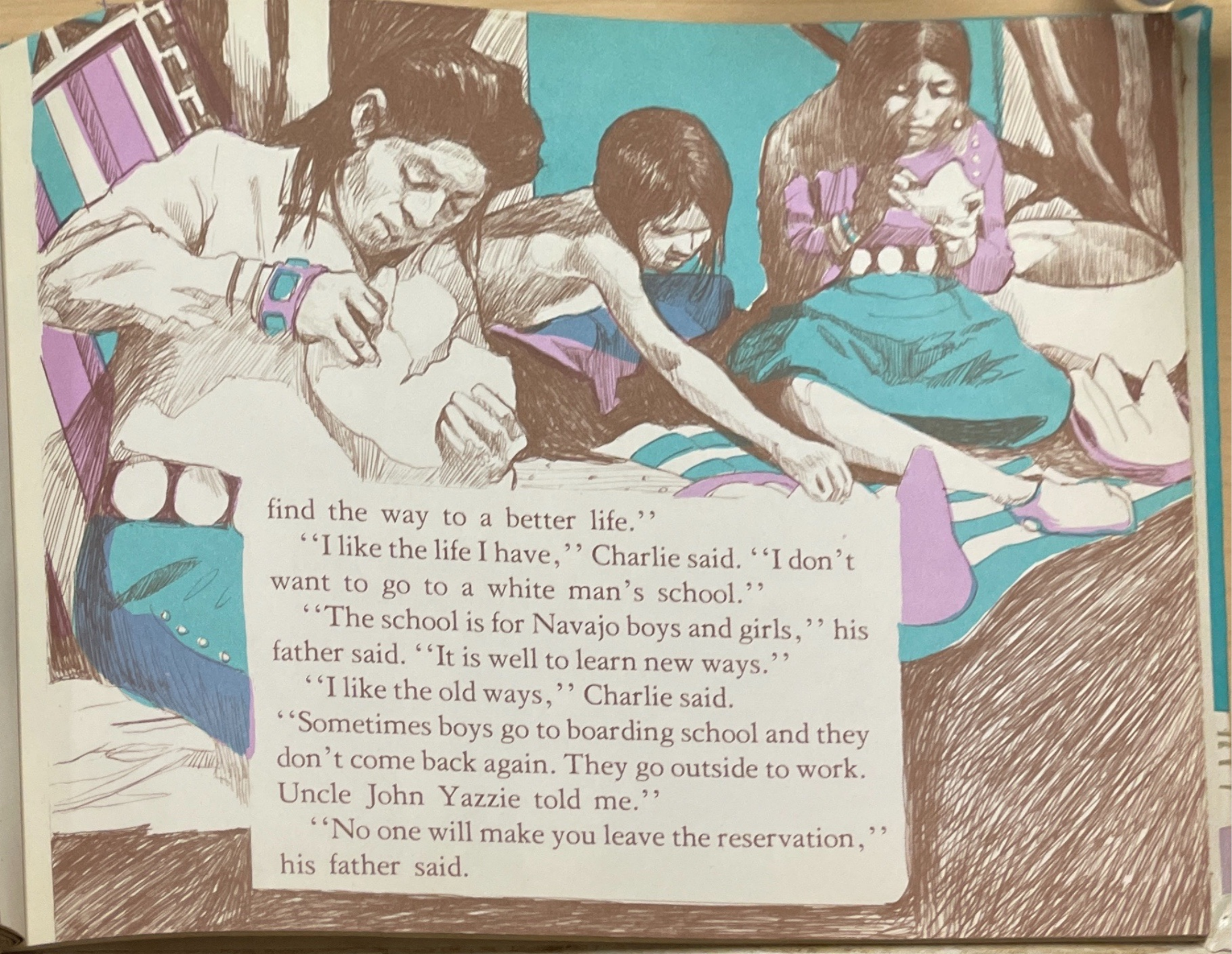
“I hid,” Charlie said.

“Why did you hide, my son?”

Charlie couldn’t tell his father that he was afraid to go to boarding school, for he knew the law of the Navajo. “Be brave,” Navajo fathers told their sons.

Charlie wasn’t even sure what he was afraid of. He wished they lived near a bus stop, where he could get on a school bus and ride to day school. But boarding school. What happens there?

“You must go,” his father said. “You will



find the way to a better life.”

“I like the life I have,” Charlie said. “I don’t want to go to a white man’s school.”

“The school is for Navajo boys and girls,” his father said. “It is well to learn new ways.”

“I like the old ways,” Charlie said.

“Sometimes boys go to boarding school and they don’t come back again. They go outside to work. Uncle John Yazzie told me.”

“No one will make you leave the reservation,” his father said.

The next morning, Charlie knew he wouldn't have to worry about school, for this was the day when a big celebration was to be held near the trading post. His uncle would be too busy to bother about Charlie.

Charlie and his family rode in their creaking old wagon behind their spotted horse.

Charlie's cousin Walter was there. Walter wasn't afraid of anything. Charlie sometimes thought that Walter was the bravest boy on the whole reservation.

One of Charlie's uncles, Tim Many Hats, helped another uncle tie a horse close against a post.

"Which boy will ride him?"

The horse flattened its ears and rolled its eyes and tried to jerk back from the post.

"I'll ride," Walter said.





With a big jump, Walter was on the horse's back.

Tim Many Hats freed the horse, and away they went. The horse bucked twice, and Walter fell off and broke his wrist. Walter's father drove him to the hospital to get his wrist fixed.



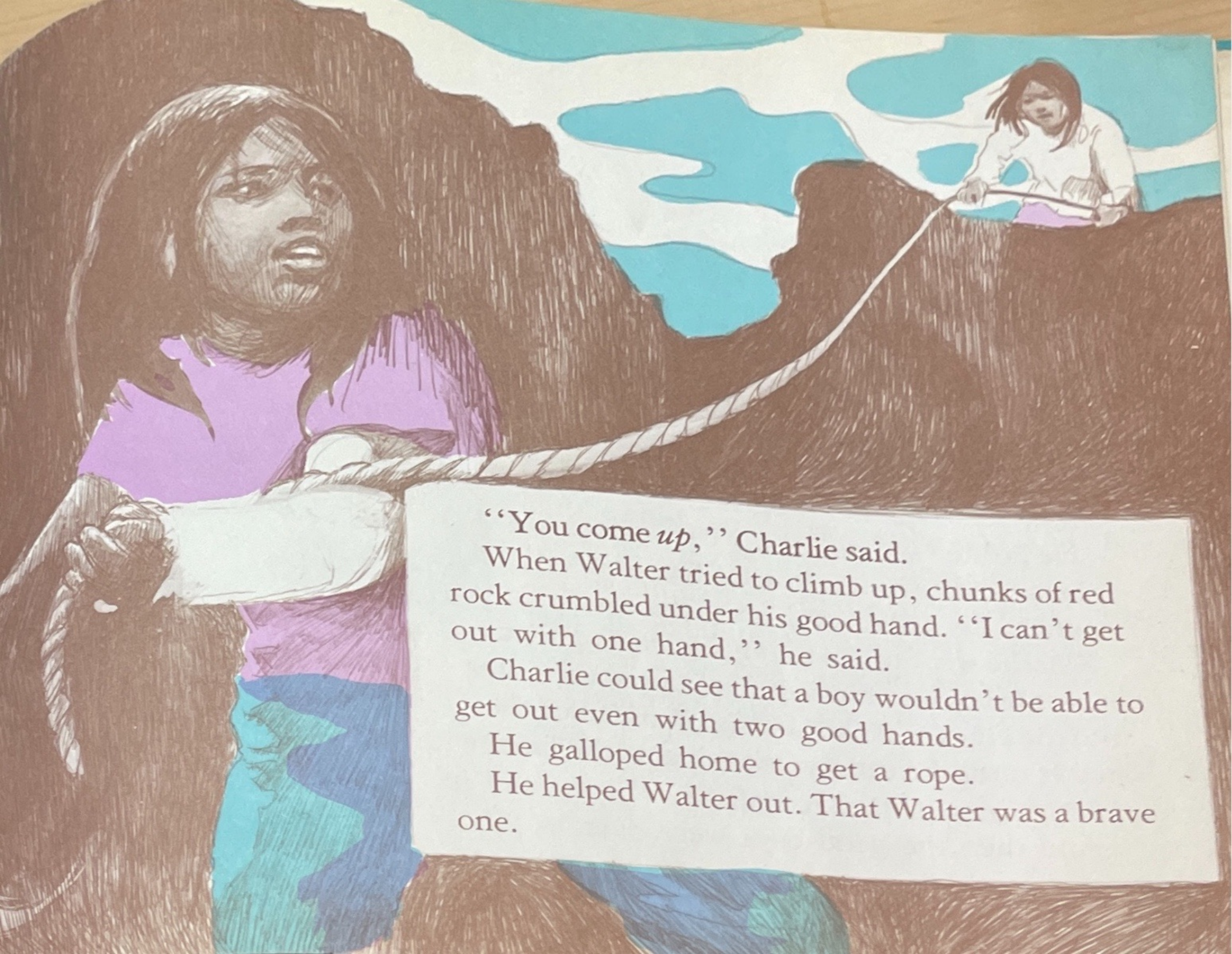
The next afternoon, Charlie and Walter met on the desert.

Charlie rode bareback on the spotted horse. Walter rode bareback, too. One arm was in a white cast from his fingers to his elbow.

For a while, they rode along together without saying anything.

They came to a deep gully too wide to jump.
“Let’s get off and look,” Walter said.
They slid from their horses and looked over the
rim of the gully. It was steep and deep.
“Let’s slide down,” Walter said. “Come on.
Follow me.”
The horses stood patiently.
Walter slid, feetfirst, straight to the bottom.
“It was *easy*,” Walter said, “Come on
down.”





“You come *up*,” Charlie said.
When Walter tried to climb up, chunks of red rock crumbled under his good hand. “I can’t get out with one hand,” he said.
Charlie could see that a boy wouldn’t be able to get out even with two good hands.
He galloped home to get a rope.
He helped Walter out. That Walter was a brave one.

For a few days, Charlie was safe from his Uncle John Yazzie.

Charlie dug clay for his Aunt Minnie so she could make pottery.

He gathered bee plant so his mother could make yellow wool for her weaving.

He hoisted a huge, empty can up into the wagon, and he rode to the trading post with his mother, his father and his sisters.

Charlie went to the filling station and filled a bucket from the water tap. He poured the water into the big can. Again and again, he filled the bucket until the can was sloshing at the brim with water to use in their cornfield.

And then the good days were over.





“Your uncle will come for you today,” his father said. “You will not hide again.”

Charlie’s mother packed a suitcase with jeans and a shirt and a pair of soft buckskin boots. Charlie straightened his shoulders and walked out to the pickup.

He and his uncle jolted across the desert. They rode all through the morning while the sun climbed high and higher in the sky. And finally, there was the boarding school.

Low buildings lined the street—neat, clean, low gray-green buildings. And Charlie was alone in front of a door. The door opened.

He stumbled inside and the door closed behind him.

The first month of school was bad. There were Navajo boys and girls everywhere. They all knew what they were doing and where they were going.

Charlie watched a big boy put dirty clothes into a washing machine. They boy put Charlie's shirt in, too.

"I only get it dirty again," Charlie said. He slept in a bed and he learned to straighten the blanket in the morning.

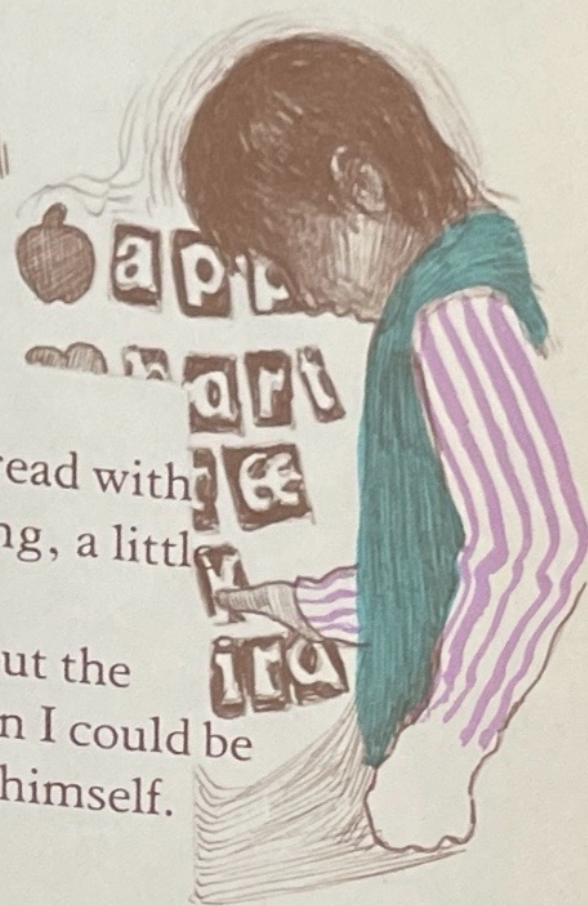
"I only stir it up again at night," Charlie said. "At home I sleep on my sheepskin on the good hard ground and I like it that way."

"I know," the boy said. "But you'll get used to the bed."

Charlie learned to take a shower. He thought about the waste of water. Water splashing on his own body instead of on the thirsty cornfields at home.

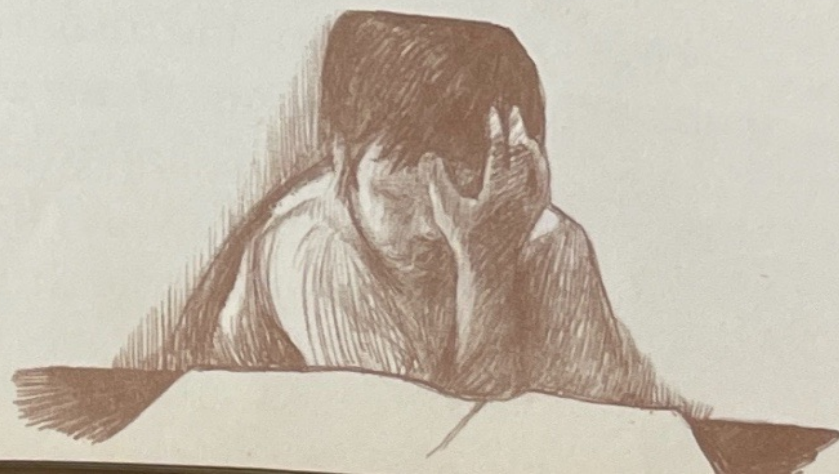
"Who fills the water can from the tap at the filling station?" he wondered.





He was the only big boy learning to read with little boys. He learned a lot about reading, a little about spelling and less about math.

Sitting in math class, he thought about the waste of time. "Why do I sit here, when I could be riding over the desert?" he thought to himself.





After classes, he wandered through the halls, looking through doors where boys worked with silver and turquoise, where girls sat weaving at their looms.

And in his own dorm, he sat and thought about the quiet desert.

There was no place in school where he could go to find quiet, except in the library. He liked the stillness there. Sometimes he closed his eyes and imagined how it would feel to be free back on the desert. He imagined that he was lying stretched out in the shade of a cliff, with the wind in his face. Even reading would be good on the desert. He thought about books and the desert—they belonged together.

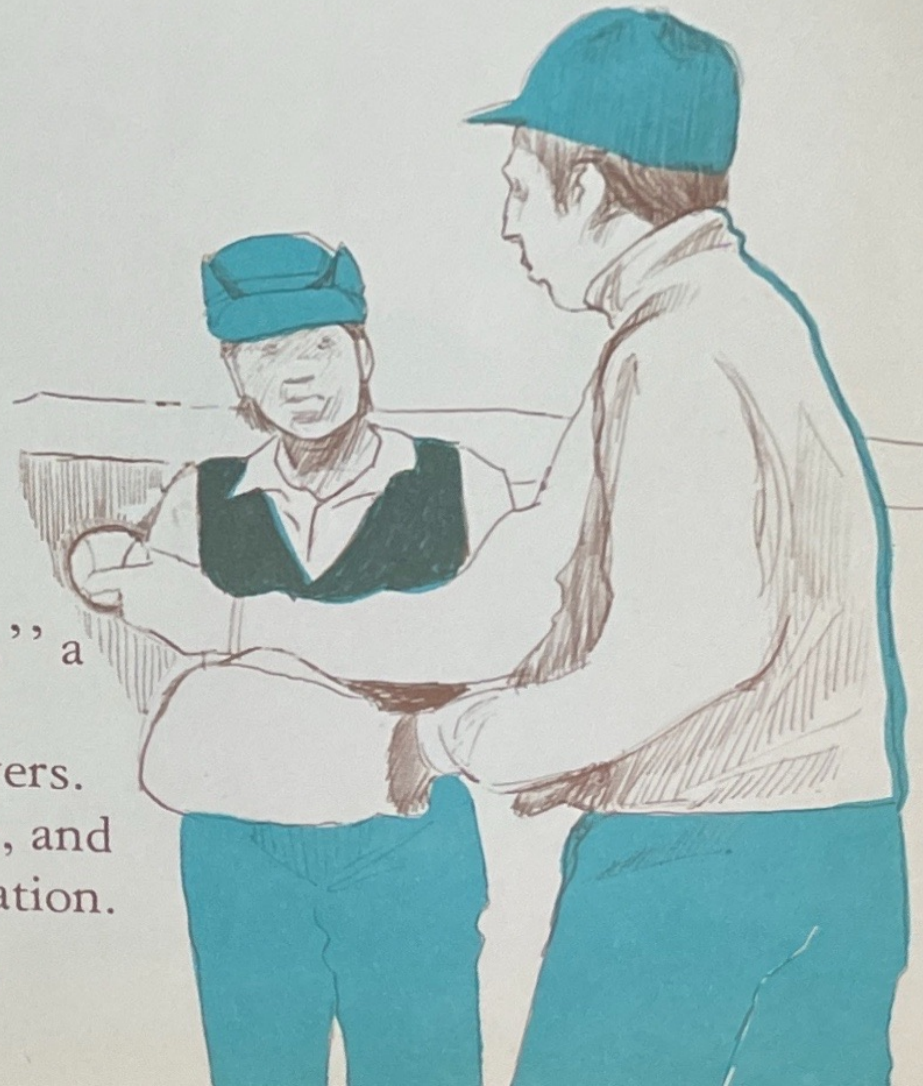
There was another place that Charlie liked in school. He liked the baseball diamond. When he swung his bat and heard the sharp crack of ball on wood, he felt strong and powerful.

“Home-Run Charlie’s hit one again,” a boy yelled.



“Charlie, you’ll be a great baseball player,” a teacher said.

Charlie had heard about great baseball players. They joined teams that played on the outside, and Charlie was *not* going to leave the reservation.



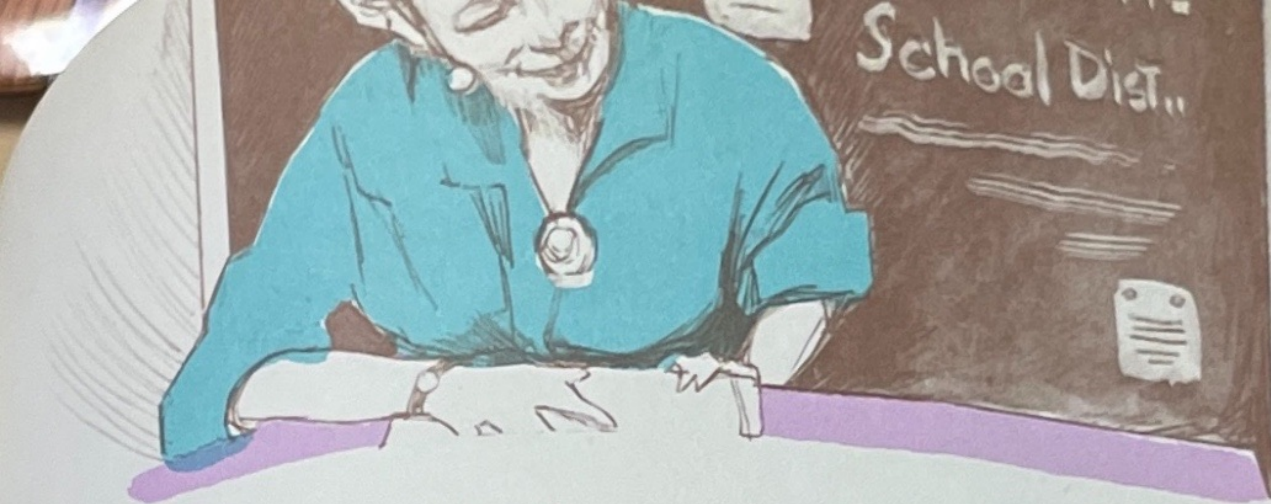


During that first month, Charlie had two fights. Once he found a red sweater that was almost his size. He put it on.

“You’ve got my sweater,” a boy said.
“I found it,” Charlie said. He hit the boy and the boy hit him back. It was a good fight. Afterward, Charlie gave the boy his sweater.

Once Charlie was carrying a plate in the dining room. The plate was piled with hot meat loaf and squash. He bumped into a boy and the plate crashed to the floor. Everybody laughed, so Charlie shoved the boy and the fight was on.

A teacher separated them and took Charlie to the principal.



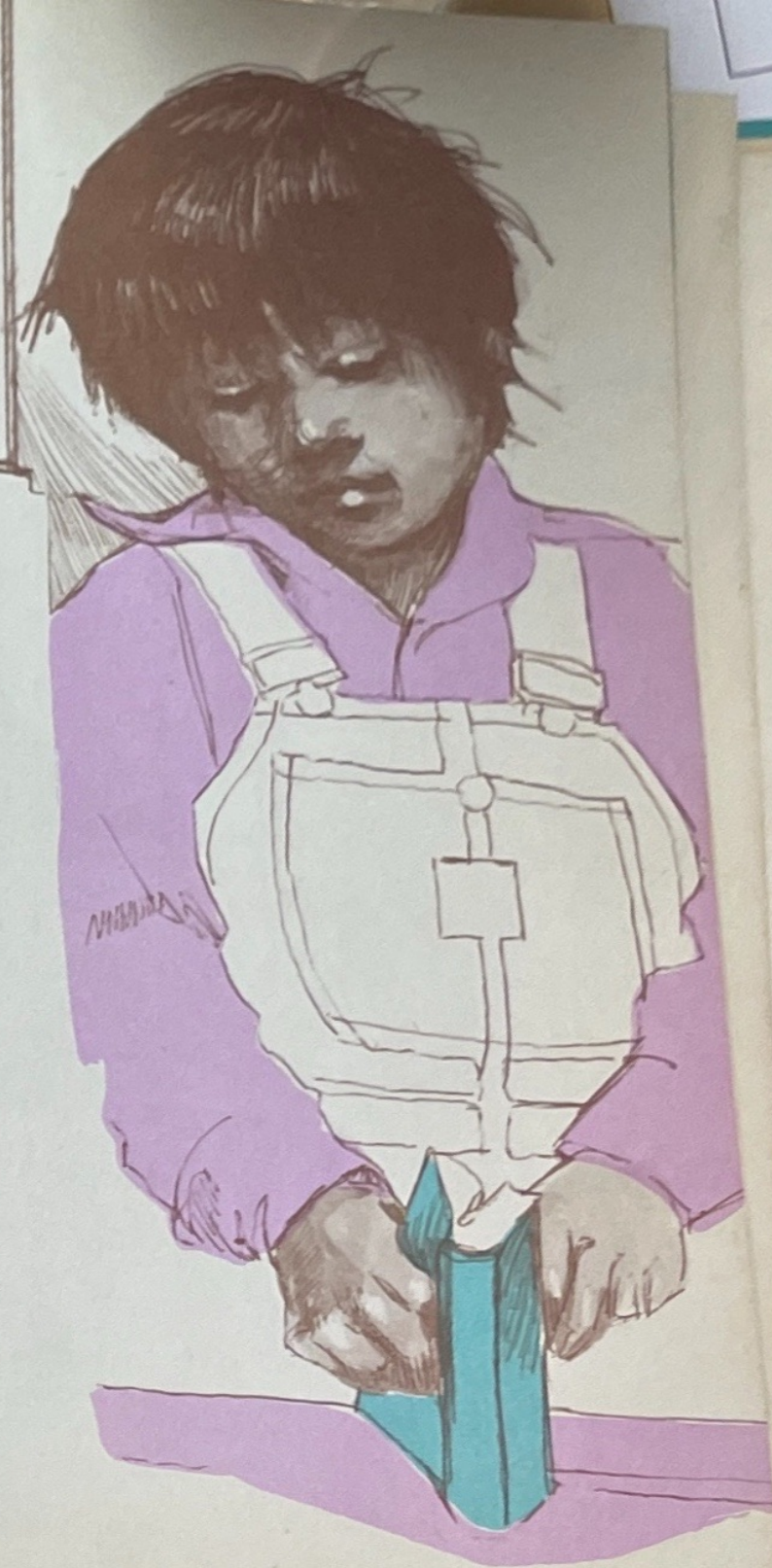
“Charlie, what is worrying you?” she asked. Charlie looked at his feet and wondered. “Is there anything you like in school?” she asked. “That is—anything other than baseball?” Charlie didn’t answer.

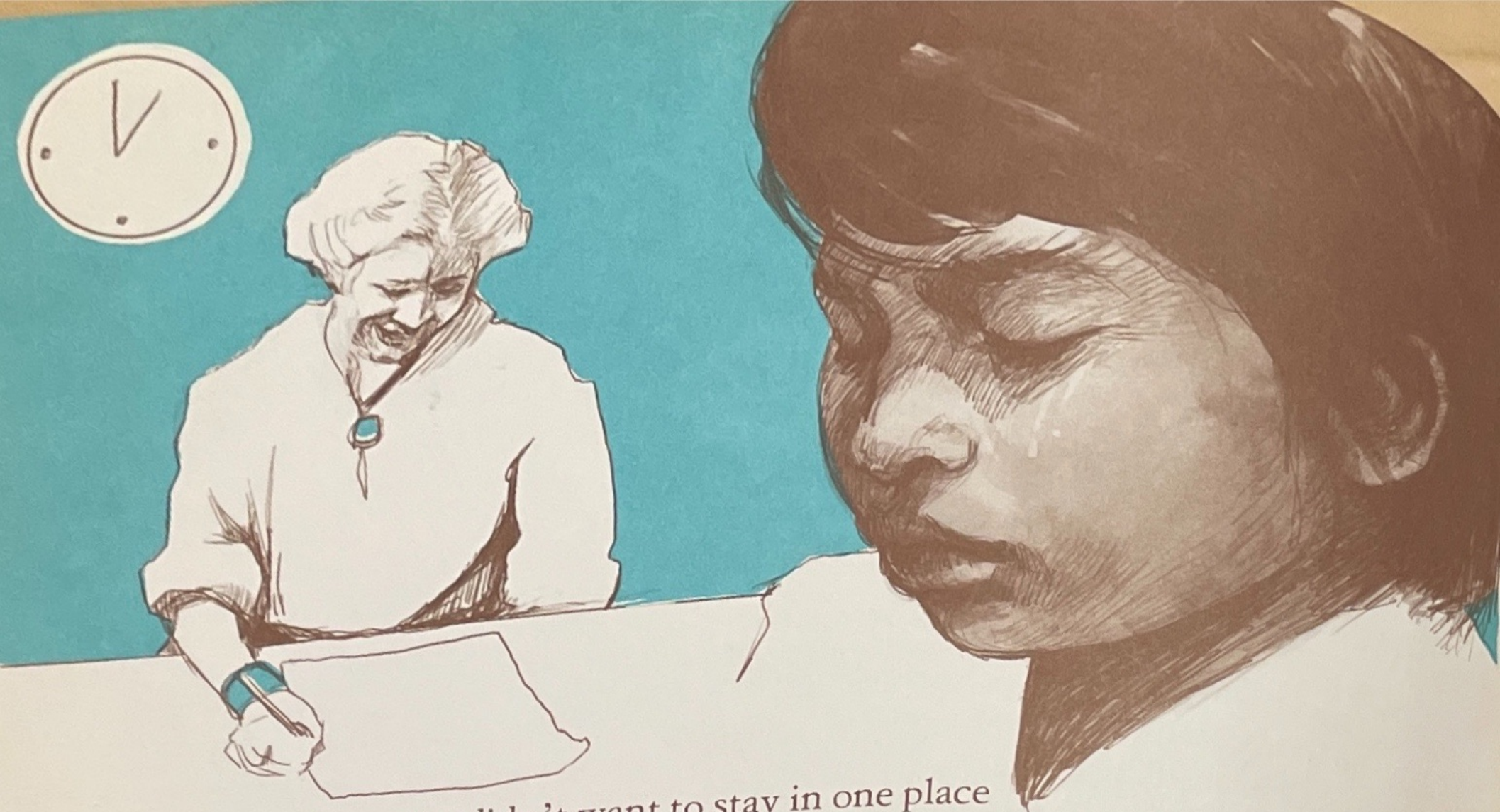
“How would you like to learn to work with silver and turquoise?” she asked. “The boys are making handsome belts.” Charlie didn’t look up.

“Maybe you’d like to learn about farm animals, how to care for sheep—how to make the flock fatter and finer?”

“I don’t want to know any more about sheep than I know now,” Charlie thought.

“How would you like to learn to fix cars and help your uncle at the filling station?”





Charlie knew he didn't want to stay in one place like a filling station. What he wanted was the freedom of the desert—the freedom of the whole reservation.

“Maybe my family needs me at home,”
Charlie said.

That day when the bus came, Walter was on it.
“Uncle John Yazzie caught you?” Charlie
asked.

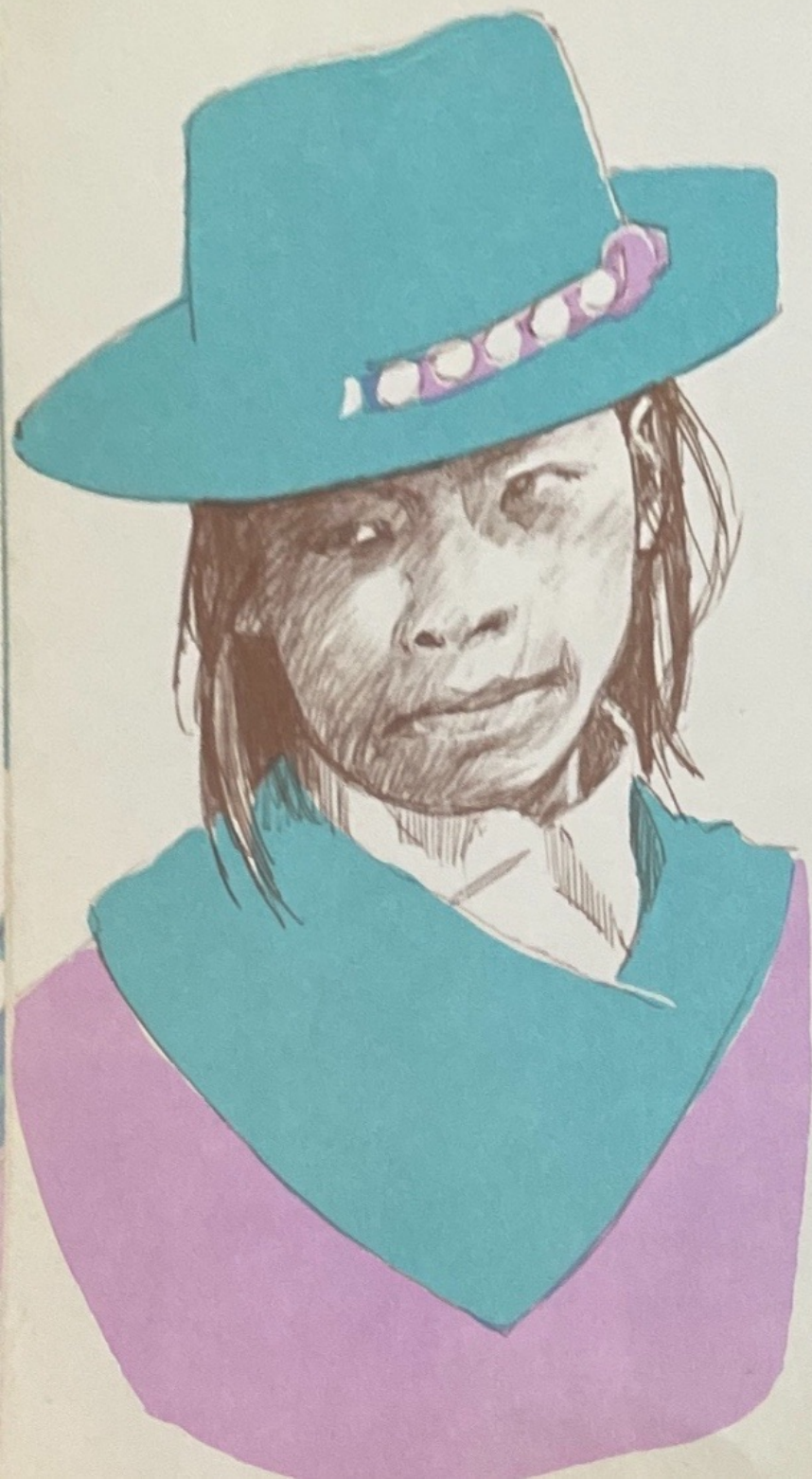
“He caught me.” Walter’s voice was loud.
“He talks loud because he’s scared,” Charlie
thought. “You have to go to the main office
first,” he said. “I’ll show you.” He led the way.

Charlie waited for him outside the door. He
would show Walter where to go. He would tell
him what to do.



My Signature

Staff Signa



When Walter came back, he still spoke in a loud voice. "She asks too many questions," he said.

"It's not bad here," Charlie said. "Some things are good. We'll stay together, and when vacation comes, we'll go home together." He thought about home. "Walter," he said, "who fills the water buckets at the filling station?"

"Your little sisters fill the bucket. They carry it together," Walter said.

"Who watches the sheep?"

"Your little sisters watch the sheep."

"Who gathers the bee plant?"

"Your mother gathers the bee plant. She also digs clay for our aunt."

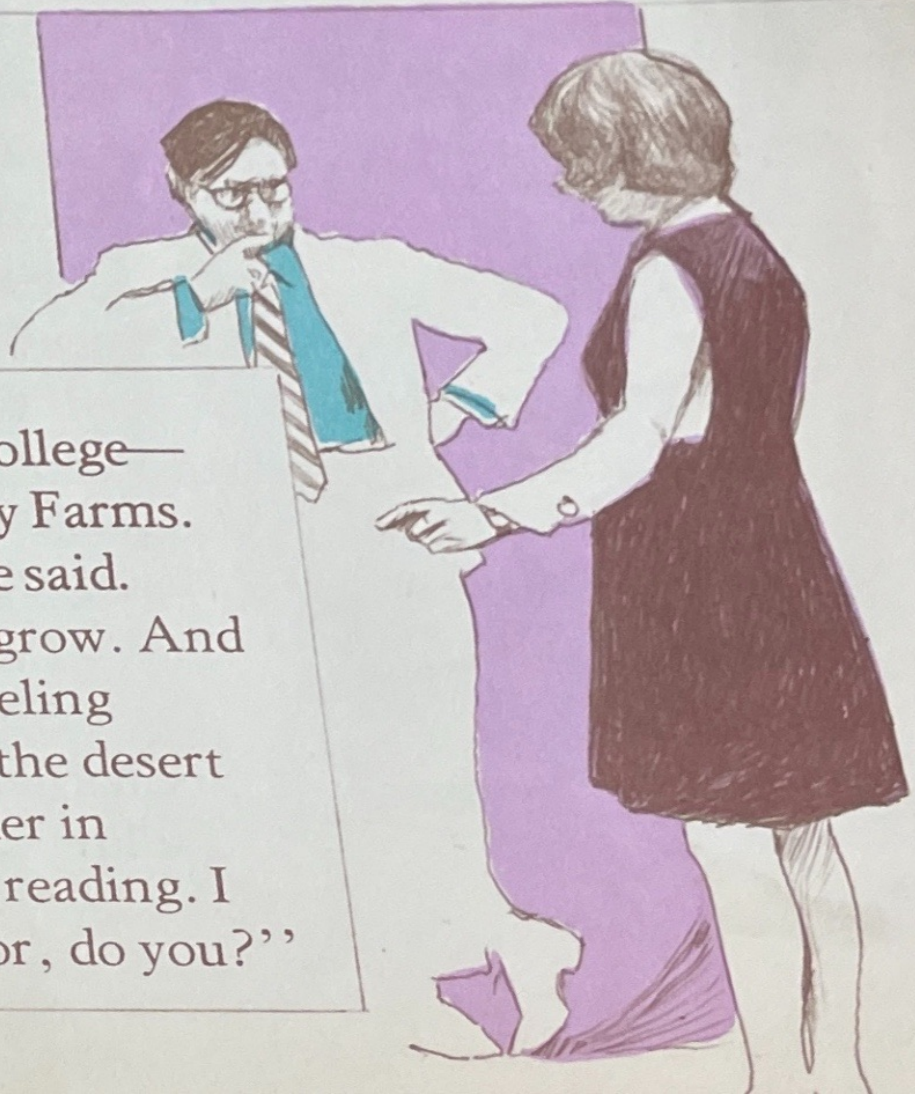
That was good to know. Everything was all right at home.



The next morning he and Walter went down the hall together.

At the far end of the hall, a teacher and a stranger were talking together. A stranger in school—Charlie touched Walter's arm. "We'll wait," he said.

The stranger was talking about a college—the Navajo Community College at Many Farms. "It is run *by* Navajos, *for* Navajos," he said. "Now, our library is small, but it will grow. And someday—someday—we'll have a traveling library in pickup trucks that will cross the desert to take three books to every small herder in Navajoland—three books for summer reading. I don't think that's too much to hope for, do you?"





“No,” Charlie thought. “No. That’s not too much to want. That’s not too much. And maybe I can be one who gets in my pickup and zooms over the desert to take books to little herders. When vacation comes, I can work with Uncle John Yazzie. Maybe we’ll find a pickup on a junk pile. One that’s no good. And if I know enough, I’ll make it run—”

“Walter,” he said, “wait here for me.” He slid through the door to the principal’s office.

“Yes, Charlie?”

“I would like to learn how to fix pickups.”

“Good,” the principal said. “Good for you, Charlie. Then you can help your uncle at the filling station.”



Walter followed Charlie everywhere.
Together they washed their shirts in the
washing machine.

Together they took a motor apart and tried to
put the pieces together again.

Now Charlie wasn't the only big boy reading
beginner's books in the library. There were two
big boys—he and Walter.

When winter came, they would go back to their own hogans for a short vacation. And Charlie knew he wouldn't be afraid to come back to school. He wasn't afraid of anything now—except maybe that deep gully on the desert. And if Walter ever decided to slide down into the gully again, Charlie would be the one to get a rope and pull him out.







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LIFE OF THE SHEETS